

Memorandum

TO: BUILDING BETTER
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

FROM: James R. Helmer

SUBJECT: SANTA CLARA/ALUM ROCK
TRANSIT CORRIDOR

DATE: 04-22-05

Approved



Date

4/25/05

RECOMMENDATION

Accept status report on the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Transit Corridor project.

BACKGROUND

As part of the Downtown East Valley Transit Improvement Program, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is developing a project to construct transit improvements along the Santa Clara/ Alum Rock corridor. The Santa Clara/ Alum Rock project is considering two transit mode alternatives to serve the corridor: 1) Enhanced Bus and 2) Single-Car Light Rail Transit. This status report provides information on the following topics:

- Policy Advisory Board (PAB) recommendations
- VTA staff preliminary recommendations
- Project funding issues
- Status of environmental review process

ANALYSIS

The following is a description of the two transit mode alternatives:

- Enhanced Bus - The Enhanced Bus alternative would provide direct, limited stop service between the Diridon Station and the Eastridge Transit Center and would utilize transit priority measures that may include queue jump lanes and signal priority. Eleven new light rail-type stations would be constructed as part of the project.
- Single-Car Light Rail - The Single Car LRT alternative would provide direct, at-grade service from Diridon Station to the Eastridge Transit Center with 11 stations. Vehicles would operate in separate right-of-way from the Diridon Station along San Fernando and along Almaden Boulevard to Santa Clara Street, and in mixed-flow traffic along the

outside auto lane on Santa Clara and Alum Rock between Almaden Boulevard and King Road. Continuing eastward, vehicles will operate in the median east of King Road.

Policy Advisory Board Recommendations

At the April 7, 2005 meeting of the Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board (PAB), the Board adopted the Single-Car Light Rail as the mode for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Transit Improvement Project and directed that this recommendation be forwarded to the Santa Clara Valley Board of Directors and included in discussions at the April 22, 2005, Board of Directors Workshop (see attached memorandum from the PAB). Members of the PAB include City of San José Vice Mayor Chavez (Board Chairperson), City of San José Councilmember Campos (Board Vice-Chairperson), City of San José Councilmember Cortese and Santa Clara County Supervisors McHugh and Alvarado.

MTA Staff Preliminary Recommendation

At the April 7, 2005 meeting of the Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board, MTA staff presented their preliminary recommendation favoring the Enhanced Bus option. Their recommendation is based on the following key findings:

- Meets projected passenger demand – At peak demand, light rail is limited to 10-minute headways requiring supplemental bus service to meet demand. The Enhanced Bus can operate at 5-minute headways.
- Delivers both operating and capital cost effectiveness – Annualized cost per passenger for Enhanced Bus is less than half the cost per passenger for light rail (\$5.86 to \$12.76, respectively).
- Provides optimal operational flexibility – The light rail alternative will operate in mixed flow with automobiles on a fixed guideway and will be unable to provide the same operational performance and reliability as the rest of the light rail system.
- Allows for expedited implementation – Enhanced Bus service can be operational within a three to four year timeframe. The light rail alternative is dependent upon completion of the Silicon Valley Rapid Transit Project.
- Minimizes construction impacts – A key issue of adjacent businesses and residents. Enhanced Bus will primarily impact station areas and will be of a much shorter duration.

Project Funding Issues

The Downtown East Valley Transit (DTEV) Improvement Plan includes two primary projects:

<u>Projects</u>	<u>Cost (2003\$)</u>
1A) Capitol Expressway LRT extension to Eastridge	\$291 million
1B) LRT extension from Eastridge to Neiman	\$118 million
Light Rail Storage Facility	\$ 21 million
2) Santa Clara/ Alum Rock Transit Corridor	
a) Enhanced Bus or	\$ 85 million
b) Single-Car Light Rail	\$298 million

The total budget for the DTEV plan from the 2000 Measure A program is \$550 million (in 2003\$). Based on the estimated year of construction, the escalated project budget is \$655 million. It is noted that the current DTEV budget is not sufficient to fund light rail projects in the both the Capitol corridor (with the extension to Neiman) and the Santa Clara/ Alum Rock corridor.

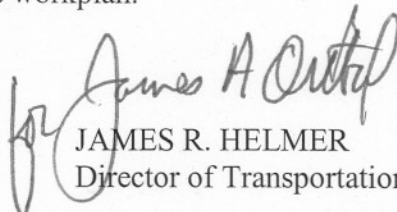
Additionally, due to the severe economic downturn, the revenue for the Measure A program has been reduced by 27%. As a result, the VTA Board is reviewing a long-range transit strategy for the Measure A program that considers a new tax measure and changes to schedules and funding levels for the various projects in the program, including the DTEV projects. The VTA Board held a workshop to discuss the transit strategy on April 22, 2005 and will continue discussions through June 2005.

Status of Environmental Process

It is estimated that circulation of the Draft EIS/R and the public hearings would occur in Fall 2005. The process for formal policy action on the selection of a preferred alternative includes the following sequence of events.

1. Public release of Draft EIS/R
2. Community outreach and public hearing
3. VTA staff recommendation of preferred alternative
4. BBT Committee/ City Council review and recommendation
5. VTA Policy Advisory Board action

The earliest expected schedule for BBT Committee review of the preferred alternative is now October 2005. Staff will continue to monitor the status of the project and recommend a new schedule for the Summer/Fall BBT Committee workplan.


JAMES R. HELMER
Director of Transportation

Attachment



Date: April 20, 2005
Committee Meeting Date: N/A
Board Meeting Date: April 22, 2005
ACTION DISCUSSION INFO X

BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Board of Directors

FROM: Cindy Chavez
Chair, Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board

SUBJECT: Downtown East Valley Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor Mode
Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION:

The Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board (PAB) formally recommends that the Single-Car Light Rail Alternative be considered the preferred mode in the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor.

BACKGROUND:

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock portion of Downtown East Valley is currently evaluating two build alternatives, Enhanced Bus and Single-Car Light Rail. The Draft EIS/EIR will be circulated for public comment later this year.

VTA's Draft Long-Term Transit Capital Investment Program has assumed the Enhanced Bus Alternative at a cost of \$85 million (in 2003 dollars) for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock portion in the Program's Expenditure Plan. This was VTA's preliminary staff recommendation brought to the PAB in August 2004. The Single-Car Light Rail Alternative would cost \$298 million (in 2003 dollars). The Draft Transit Capital Investment Program (TCIP) incorporated the staff recommendation, even though the PAB requested that staff include both alternatives. This would have respected the process that the PAB and community are undertaking the evaluation of the alternatives.

DISCUSSION:

The PAB takes strong exception to only including the Enhanced Bus alternative in the Draft Long-Term Transit Capital Investment Program being circulated for public review. The PAB

has consistently expressed a strong preference for Light Rail on the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor since the inception of the Downtown East Valley Study.

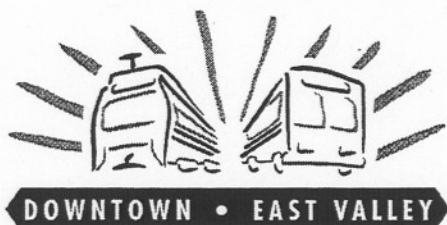
When VTA completed the Downtown East Valley Major Investment Study in August 2000, the DTEV PAB recommended light rail as the preferred alternative. The DTEV PAB was prepared to move forward with the Light Rail Alternative as the exclusive "preferred" option at the beginning of the environmental process. In response to staff request, the PAB generously agreed to an environmental document that did not identify a "preferred alternative" and included Enhanced Bus as an alternative. However, the PAB has maintained the strong preference for Light Rail.

When the Draft Long-Term Transit Capital Investment Program was approved by the Board in December 2004 and released for public review in February 2005, the PAB was extremely disappointed that the Enhanced Bus was the only alternative for the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor included in the draft program.

The PAB has been working through the alternatives and environmental analysis since 2000 and the environmental process should be completed by early 2006, with a decision on the alternative. The timeline for the environmental process is attached. Since the two alternatives are still being evaluated in the environmental process, it is of great concern that the Draft Transit Capital Investment Program does not include a range of costs covering both alternatives. Staff brought forward their preliminary recommendation in August 2004. There has not been a public outreach process carried out on the review of staff's recommendation and the PAB's recommendation. The release of the Draft TCIP without both alternatives being vetted thoroughly with the public seems to shun the environmental process.

For this reason the PAB has no alternative but to make a formal recommendation to the VTA Board identifying Single-Car Light Rail as the preferred mode in the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor.

Attachment A



Project History/Milestones

Timeline	Downtown East Valley Transit Improvement Plan
February 1998	VTa Board establishes Downtown East Valley Policy Advisory Board (PAB)
February 1999	Start of Major Investment Study (MIS)
August 2000	VTa Board approves Preferred Investment Strategy
September 2000	VTa Board approves Resolution designating DTEV as the next priority project after Measure A+B projects
January 2001	Conceptual Engineering begins
Fall 2001	Environmental Process initiated for Capitol Expressway and Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridors

Timeline	Capitol Expressway Corridor
April 2004	Draft EIS/EIR circulated for public comment, Public Hearing held in May 2004
August 2004	Final staff recommendation approved by PAB
September 2004	Preliminary Engineering begins from Alum Rock Ave to Neiman Blvd
May 2005	<i>Final EIR to VTA Board for approval</i>
June 2005	<i>Value Engineering concepts presented to PAB</i>

Timeline	Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor
August 2004	Preliminary Staff Recommendation for Enhanced Bus presented to PAB
February 2005	Draft Long-Term Capital Investment Program released for public comment
September/October 2005	<i>Draft EIS/EIR evaluating Enhanced Bus and Single Car Light Rail Alternatives circulated for public comment</i>
February 2006	<i>Circulate Final EIS/EIR</i>
April 2006	<i>Final EIS/EIR with Staff and PAB recommendations to VTA Board for approval</i>